DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 457 SP 032 688

AUTHOR	Buchmann, Margret
TITLE	Making New or Making Do: An Inconclusive Argument about Teaching. Issue Paper 90-7.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Research on Teacher Education, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Sep 90
NOTE	24p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Center for Research on Teacher Education, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($4.60).
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Change Agents; *Concept Formation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experiential Learning; Lifelong Learning; Psychological Patterns; *Socialization; *Teacher Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The idea that "breaks from experience" are necessary in teacher learning is a response to the fact that teachers come to their preparation with set ideas about their work that tend to fit with the given. This paper examines justifications for such "breaks" centering, first, on the limitations of what teachers learn through experience and, second, on comparisons of teacher learning with socialization in other professions. The argument questions the notion of teachers as experts and cautions against the confident pursuit of reforms. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED325457

Issue Paper 90-7

Making New or Making Do: An Inconclusive Argument About Teaching

Margret Buchmann

National
Center for Research
on Teacher Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
CE 057 688

Sponsored by the United States Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Issue Paper 90-7

MAKING NEW OR MAKING DO: AN INCONCLUSIVE ARGUMENT ABOUT TEACHING

Margret Buchmann

Published by

The National Center for Research on Teacher Education
116 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

September 1990

This work is sponsored in part by the National Center for Research on Teacher Education and the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The NCRTE and the IRT are funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or the Department.

National Center for Research on Teacher Education

The National Center for Research on Teacher Education (NCRTE) was founded at Michigan State University in 1985 by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

The NCRTE is committed to improving teacher education through research on its purposes, its character and quality, and its role in teacher learning. NCRTE defines teacher education broadly and includes in its portfolio such diverse approaches as preservice, inservice, and induction programs and alternate routes to teaching.

To further its mission, the NCRTE publishes research reports, issue papers, technical series, conference proceedings, and a newsletter on contemporary issues in teacher education. For more information about the NCRTE or to be placed on its mailing list, please write to the Editor, National Center for Research on Teacher Education, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Director:	Mary M. Kennedy
Associate Directors:	Robert E. Floden G. Williamson McDiarmid
Editor:	Sandra Gross

Many papers published by the NCRTE are based on the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach Study, a single multisite longitudinal study. The researchers who have contributed to this study are listed below:

Marianne Amarel
Deborah Loewenberg Ball
Joyce Cain
Sandra Callis
Barbara Camilleri
Anne Chang
David K. Cohen
Ada Beth Cutler
Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Mary L. Gomez
Samgeun K. Kwon
Magdalene Lampert
Perry Lanier
Glenda Lappan
Sarah McCarthey
James Mead
Susan L. Melnick
Monica Mitchell
Harold Morgan
James Mosenthal
Gary Natriello
Barbara Neufeld
Lynn Paine
Michelle Parker
Richard Prawat
Pamela Schram
Trish Stoddart
M. Teresa Tatto
Sandra Wilcox
Suzanne Wilson
Lauren Young
Kenneth M. Zeichner
Karen K. Zumwalt

Abstract

The idea that "breaks from experience" are necessary in teacher learning is a response to the fact that teachers come to their preparation with set ideas about their work that tend to fit with the given. This paper examines justifications for such "breaks" centering, first, on the limitations of what teachers learn through experience and, second, on comparisons of teacher learning with socialization in other professions. The argument questions the notion of teachers as experts and cautions against the confident pursuit of reforms.

MAKING NEW OR MAKING DO: AN INCONCLUSIVE ARGUMENT ABOUT TEACHING[1]

Margret Buchmann[2]

What Seems To Be the Problem?

Teachers come to their education equipped with many set ideas. These ideas are often implicit and refer to teaching, learning, school, children, and the subjects to be taught. Emotionally charged, these ideas tend to fit with the imperfect social and institutional order into which future teachers are born and in which they participate. The observations of the 19th-century philosopher Josiah Royce (1908/1969) about how people learn what they want to do with their lives are especially true for teaching:

> One gets one's various plans of life suggested through the models that are set before each one of us by his fellows. Plans of life first come to us in connection with our endless imitative activities. These imitative processes begin in our infancy, and run on through our whole life. . . . Social activities are the ones that first tend to organize all of our instincts, to give unity to our passions and impulses, to transform our natural chaos of desires into some sort of order—usually, indeed, a very imperfect order. (p. 867)

Whatever we do as researchers and reformers in education, we cannot ignore this stubborn fact. It is troublesome, because frequently the ideas that future teachers bring to their preparation are not the sort that we would want them to entertain.

The ideas of future teachers have their roots and warrants in common sense and life experience—a powerful combination of the "plain" with the "vivid" that is hard to combat. Years spent in classrooms, watching teachers and being pupils, contribute to the assumptions of future teachers and shape their understandings of teaching and learning, of children and subject areas, in terms of concrete images and habitual interpretations. How can one educate people about what they are already familiar with? Structures which uphold their world seem necessary and inconsequential to people incapable of grasping them.

The Questions

The difficult question for teacher education research and curriculum is just what can and should be substituted for what is conventionally seen as true and right in schools.

---

[1]An earlier version of this paper appeared in 1989 under the title "Breaking From Experience in Teacher Education: When Is It Necessary? How Is It Possible?" in the *Oxford Review of Education*, *15*, 181-195.

[2]Margret Buchmann, a professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher with the Institute for Research on Teaching.

Followers of Dewey would advise using the experiences of teacher candidates as foundations for bridges to new ways of thinking and acting. (This is easier said than done, as even the faithful will admit.) Yet scholars and teacher educators have begun to question Dewey's "continuity principle," or the notion that desirable learning always evolves in an unbroken chain out of past—preferably concrete, everyday—experience (Floden, Buchmann, and Schwille, 1987). Some explore the idea that the preparation of teachers must *go against* the grain of ordinary experience, that it must induce "breaks" with what can be learned in the school of life (see, e.g., Ball, 1989; Florio-Ruane and Lensmire, 1990; McDiarmid, 1990).

Does learning to teach necessitate instructive interruptions of what future teachers consider the natural order of teaching and learning in schools? How can one justify the approach of breaking with future teachers' experiences? I will work through these questions by examining two arguments supporting the case for breaks with experience: the "conversion" argument, based on comparisons of teaching to other professions, and the "dead-hand-of-the-past" argument. The fundamental justification for this approach to professional education lies in the hope that reversals of belief will enable future teachers to make critical ideals of knowledge and justice felt in their work. As William James (1891/1969) explains:

> All the higher, more penetrating ideals are *revolutionary*. They present themselves far less in the guise of effects of past experience than in that of probable causes of future experience, factors to which the environment and the lessons it has so far taught us *must learn to bend*. (p. 172; italics added)

The call for "breaks" is, in essence, a variant of the familiar plea for radical change, on the assumption that the gains will be worth the costs.

Questioning the Questions

What do we mean, and what do we mean to do, when we speak of "breaking from experience in teacher education?" A brief digression should be helpful. Experiences are the stuff of life and thought. People have and undergo experiences all the time: in riding a bicycle, having a fight, dreaming, or reading a paper. Breaks are extraordinary events that interrupt the flow of hours, thoughts, and activities. They can be pleasant or unpleasant, salutary or not, depending on what is being interrupted and what does supplant it.

Breaking with or from something suggests a turning to something else. Victorian women left their homes to nurse soldiers on some battle field or to explore the Himalayas. A child raised among the proverbial idle rich or laboring poor might turn to art as a vocation, and so on. As implied in these examples, what people break with seems less desirable than what they turn to, usually in the face of opposition and upheavals. The reason for making a break of this sort lies in the different and *superior* states or

characteristics supposed to ensue. Thus, "breaking from or with something" is associated with worthwhile change: the getting of wisdom; an independent spirit, or the advancement of a better social order.

Whatever people are turning to, however, in breaking with prior experience, they cannot escape experience. Rather, they move from one realm of experience, conceptually and practically organized, to another realm with a different organization. People usually think of this movement as learning; part of it stems from seeing the past differently, in the light of other ideas. Hence, experience is often not so much overcome as transformed, and what happens to people, though consequential, may be less important than what they end up *doing with it*, through secondary, "brain-born" learnings.

Do breaks from experience allow people some return to what was previously experienced as natural? Can valuable aspects of a pattern be protected while others are being replaced? These are questions of some moment, for not everything left behind will be bad in all aspects, whether it is innocence, stability, or life at home. In putting a new order in place, one must consider not only the goods one is confident of producing but also possibilities of loss and harm.

People—and I have to include myself here (see Floden, Buchmann, and Schwille, 1987)—thus do not literally mean what they say when they speak of breaking from (or with) experience. The phrase calls up a number of assumptions concerning more or less desirable conceptual and practical organizations of systematically different kinds of experiences in teaching and teacher learning. These assumptions bear on teachers, schools, pupils, teaching subjects, even on the concepts of knowing and learning, and are divided along the lines of the given and some deeper, often rosier, view. In shorthand fashion, the notion of "breaks" conveys the message that drastic measures are needed to cross the borderline.

Introducing the Supporting Arguments

The first argument in support of breaks from experience in teacher education is of a general nature. It could be called the "dead-hand-of-the-past" argument. In brief, one can argue that teacher education requires forcible instructive interruptions of what students take for granted because of the adaptive power that life experiences have. One of the effects of undergoing many everyday experiences is that they attach one to the given, whatever it may be (see, e.g., Buchmann and Schwille, 1983).

The "conversion" argument and its applications in teaching. The second argument is more specific and derives from looking at other professions. Becoming a nurse, doctor, or lawyer tends to be marked by deeply felt transformations. Learners in these professions experience their socialization as a revolutionary change of world views: a separation—almost alienation—from naive or lay perceptions, involving reversals of belief on the road to expertise and professional membership.

In teacher education, the comparative or "conversion" argument has special bearing for several areas of belief. First, understandings of teaching and its subjects can be derived either from the disciplines of knowledge or from common sense and people's experience of schooling. When we speak of "professionals," however, we usually take the side of special knowledge, of "expertise" that is, by definition, discontinuous with common sense or life experience.

A second application of the conversion argument stems from teachers' responsibility for the learning of many children from whom they may be divided by gender, culture, class, or race. If teachers are to build "bridges of reasonableness" (Soltis, 1981) between children and teaching subjects and among youngsters who differ from one another, teachers must not only know their subjects flexibly and deeply. They must likewise break with many personally compelling ideas about how people act, talk, or feel, and develop perceptions of others that are just and kind (Buchmann, 1988).

The relations of teaching to common sense and life experience are, however, complicated. Teaching and learning are universal human enterprises, neither the sole domain of experts nor limited to the institution of schooling. And the effects of experience on future teachers' thoughts and actions, though certainly not all good, will hardly be all bad. Turning to the first argument in support of breaks from experience in teacher preparation, we might ask the following question:

Does Experience Induce the Sleep of Reason?

Fond of it or not, we are all amateurs of school knowledge. With 10,000 hours of schooling in many countries, pupils learn more than the curriculum. They get acquainted with the ways of teachers and the workings of the place called school. Children are at the receiving end of the teaching typical for many schools and teachers. In participants, these "folkways of teaching" (Buchmann, 1987) induce a felt fitness between things. As patterns of thought and action, folkways do not lend themselves well to questioning, especially by insiders. But "teaching as usual" does meet some of the functional needs of schooling.

Perhaps a boy or girl of 12 years will not be able to say this clearly, but what usually happens in schools allows for some content coverage, some participation, and some classroom control by structuring who gets to say or do something, when, and, by and large, what. And in the catalogue of known means to ends in teaching, which people absorb through schooling, we have the makings of a modest science—a science that is imperfect, partial in outlook, and technical in orientation (see Schwab, 1978b). The drawback of this catalogue is that it takes means as permanent and rather ordinary ends for granted.

Why Folkways of Teaching Are Well Entrenched

The power of children's experiential learnings—many would say, mislearnings (see, e.g., Zeichner, 1980, 1981-82; Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann, 1985)—derives from both their content and their modes and contexts of acquisition. As regards content, the school knowledge students acquire fits with the views of common sense that fix attention on what seems palpably obvious. To be sure, people need to know, for instance, their number facts. But one can teach them as one has been taught; that is, mostly by telling—if necessary, repeated telling—which, together with practice, is supposed to make facts "sink into the mind." From a commonsense point of view, the concept of number is not in question; just like lectures and schools, numbers are part of our world. These things are *known*, not *to be known*—and thus they are perpetuated.

Subject to "teaching as usual" as institutional inmates, many pupils learn something some of the time and become familiar, by acquaintance and participation, with the folkways of (school) teaching themselves. Their learning is reinforced twice by experience: by the experience of *success* (if a partial, intermittent, and unevenly distributed kind of success—which is just what common sense would lead one to expect) and by the experience of *participation*, or the act and condition of taking part in school (not occasionally, but in a regular way, starting at an impressionable age).

Twice reinforced by experience, overshadowed by years of institutional captivity, and shot through with imaginative identifications, the "folkways of teaching" are well entrenched. Participation, again, has two sides. It leads to automatic readings of situation—inducing habitual meanings and actions—and is itself a powerful test. In schooling, doing things alone or in concert with others shows what works and doesn't work, given limited, utilitarian ends, such as "getting done" or "getting it right." These ends are rarely examined because of being obliquely affirmed in institutional structures and patterns of classroom life, supported, for the most part, by common sense.

For teachers, who have to act, it stands to reason that they have to find quickly what works in the range of situations they are most likely to encounter, and learn to perform that work, together with children, reliably and well. Among other things, they have to acquire techniques and habits of equable command, blending the "hard" with the "soft" sides of teaching, such as empathy and patience (Lortie, 1975). Having a repertoire of concrete, vivid images of people with the requisite presence is a great help in that, as is working in ways that fit with the expectations of school children. The placid certainty of common sense inspires new teachers with a confidence they need and that will reassure pupils besides. Are these learnings all mislearnings? The answer is ambiguous.

The Equivocal Benefits of Schooling for Learning to Teach

For one thing, it would be good to remember that people always undervalue what they have never been without. Teacher educators are no exception. I wonder what nursing educators, for example, would say if their students knew as much about hospitals as future teachers know about schools. Many nurses come to their preparation believing that they will dispense loving-kindness to the helpless (Davis, 1968). They have not had endless hours of exposure to nurses, seeing them, in the words of one nurse, "calm, balanced, efficient, moving up and down the wards self-protected by . . . bright immunity from pity . . . merging [their] own individuality in the impersonal routine of the organisation" (Brittain, 1980, p. 211). Could an aspiring public defense lawyer picture a day between chambers and courts, or imagine the wiles of judges and witnesses? Teacher educators, by contrast, can at least rely on their students' knowing schools as inmates: by participation, acquaintance, and imaginative identification, that is, with the strengths and defects of these ways of knowing.

The two faces of common sense. For another thing, acting and thinking within the system of common sense is not the same as being dead to reason. In their lighter moments, professional thinkers agree with the commonsense tenet that it is a good thing to keep things plain. Common sense has an outlook and style with appeal while avoiding some of the pitfalls of self-conscious thought. As Freud reputedly said, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

The presumption of self-evidence inherent to common sense, however, chokes off discussion and challenge. Given social change, human fallibility, and our limited knowledge, these are high costs. Furthermore, stylistic predilections for the mundane bias people and limit their vision. As William James (1891/1969) explains: "The moment you get beyond the coarser and more commonplace moral maxims, the Decalogues and Poor Richard's Almanacs, you fall into schemes and positions which to the eye of common-sense are fantastic and overstrained" (p. 171). To the extent that leading a good life (as a teacher, nurse, citizen, etc.) requires loyalty to causes and higher ideals (such as charity, truth, justice) *entwined with* loyalty to other people, these limits spell trouble. Josiah Royce (1908/1969), greatly admired by James, makes clear why that is so:

> Loyalty . . . is an idealizing of human life, a communion with invisible aspects of our social existence. Too great literalness in the interpretation of human relations is, therefore, a foe to the development of loyalty. If my neighbor is to me merely a creature of a day, who walks and eats and talks and buys and sells, I shall never learn to be loyal to his cause and to mine. (p. 958)

Obfuscations of natural understandings. What throws another wrench into my half-hearted case for schooling as part of teacher education is that typical school practices and their assumptions do not always live up to common sense. Most of us realize that children

are quite taken with the extraordinary, far removed from the banalities of basal readers or the insipid facts about "postal carriers" and "my town" presumably introducing children to their world in social studies. Some of the vapidity of school learning can be chalked up to a tradition of research on word frequencies and a confusion of the frequency with the *importance* of words in composing texts and learning to read. (Thorndike warned against this fallacy early on; see Clifford, 1978.)

An obfuscation of natural understandings can, therefore, sometimes be traced to research and its mistaken authority in education, that is, the false belief that finding out things about the world can tell people what they ought to do. The example of social studies highlights another source. As Brophy (1990) argues, the stability of the concentric pattern of "teaching as usual" in social studies—family, neighborhood, hometown, state, and so on—can be explained by the capacity of that pattern to adapt to all kinds of educational fads and external policies with which teachers must cope. This shows how functional adaptivity may override ordinary good sense in institutions.

To sum up my thoughts so far: Practitioners and researchers in education assume rightly that things could be better than they are in schools. Indeed, this is just the soothingly obvious thing a person of common sense might say. What does not follow is that the "folkways of teaching" are untested, that they are easily uprooted, or that they are readily replaceable by something else that will serve most of the needs that must be met in the situation. Nevertheless, "teaching as usual" is lacking—it can be lacking where it *is* common sense and where it fails the test of plain thinking.

The Two-Fold Authority of the Given

Regardless of their merits in the abstract, however, new understandings offered to teachers have to match the authority of the lessons absorbed in experience. "Authority" means here impressiveness as well as practicality, or objective chances at success (allowing teachers to get some content across to some people some of the time, while keeping the class in order and coping with conflicting external pressures). If reform ideologies provide no means for subsistence, they will have no power as prescriptions and most people will stick or revert to the "folkways of teaching" without being subject to blame. Replacements for the given must somehow pick up the pieces of whatever else tumbles down, and workable supplements must be structurally fitting.

The level of ideals brings particular difficulties for reform in teacher education, for we have to make strange, pale abstractions speak to future teachers, so that they can recognize their moral as well as intellectual force and respond, wholeheartedly, to the claims on their powers of imagination and action. William James (1891/1969) drives this point home: "The only force of appeal to *us*, which . . . an abstract ideal order can wield, is found in the 'everlasting ruby vaults' of our *own* human hearts, as they happen to beat responsive

and not irresponsive to the claim" (p. 178). Without responsive vibrations of students' imagination, "stubborn facts" tend to assert themselves.

Overhauling concepts of learning and knowing. There is a further big stumbling block in the path of reform. What many researchers and educators are trying to substitute for the lessons of experience in learning to teach centrally features a mode of learning and knowing that most teachers are not familiar with, and which they cannot grasp by their habitual modes of learning. If knowledge is seen as constructed and learning assimilated to inquiry, concepts of knowing and learning implicit in "teaching as usual" themselves are at issue. Teacher education reform must, therefore, include a hard look at the epistemology of schooling, including higher education.

In all of this, we need to take seriously the fact that significant learning tends to be laborious and slow. Continuing to draw on insights from the 19th century, it is worth recalling Cardinal Newman's (1852/1925) eloquent words:

> We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but, as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation, of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind. (p. 151)

And learning in this sense does not come merely by working hard, reading many books, witnessing masterful teaching, or attending philosophy lectures; a future teacher can do all these things, and still "he may not realize what his mouth utters; he may not see with his mental eye what confronts him" (p. 152).

Weighing the case for "folkways" against the case for "breaks." Given these considerations, one cannot be surprised that many reforms in schools and teacher education turn sour or do not even float. At worst, they muddle what is sound in common sense and practice with fads and quasi-scientific dogma. My qualified defense of common sense, and grudging case for the "folkways of teaching," throws doubts on the notion that learning to teach must include breaks with experience, and that all such breaks will be salutary. Yet the characteristic kinds of learning (both in content and modes and contexts of acquisition) associated with schooling and common sense also provide a justification for the forcible instructive interruption of given beliefs.

When we heavily weigh the drawbacks of schooling as teacher preparation, the question becomes how to make such breaks effectively, turning them to good account in teachers' learning. People are usually not ready to abandon the "natural attitude," which takes a given world for granted, "without having experienced a specific *shock* which compels us to break through the limits of this 'finite' province of meaning and to shift the accent of reality to another one" (Schutz, 1962, p. 231). Other professions provide blueprints for such

shifts. This is where we turn to the second argument in support of breaks from experience in teacher education, asking:

Is Professional Learning Like Seeing the World in Reverse?

People entering medical school do not feel very knowing. Instead, they are conveniently filled with a sense of their own ignorance. The preprofessional learning of these students does not ordinarily include an induction into the common varieties of doctors' "bedside manners" and ways of interacting with patients in the office. Aspiring doctors have to learn that, contrary to lay assumptions, the causes of illness are hard to pin down, a muddle of physical, environmental, and social-emotional factors, eddying inward and outward (Fox, 1957).

For nurses in training, patient care turns out strangely unlike home-grown varieties of tending the sick. "Nursing" takes on a cerebral meaning that emphasizes detached thinking about health problems over tender-minded "doing": "The student is enjoined to view her own person as a purposeful instrument in the therapeutic process, not merely as some benignly disposed vehicle through whom pre-formulated nursing procedures and techniques are dispensed" (Davis, 1968, p. 241). Law students are taught "to think like lawyers," in specialized modes of stringent reasoning and case analysis (see Bodenheimer, 1962; White, 1985). They get used to the counterintuitive fact that, in law, it is the better case and not the better *cause* that wins.

Socialization in these professions removes some certainties of common sense, while instituting forms of assurance with new and different warrants. Passing through the professional mirror, doctors, nurses, and lawyers learn to see the world from behind it. For better, for worse, their education turns out professionals who differ from people on the street by what they know and care about. I say "for worse," because sometimes we have reason to mind the distance of professionals from shared human concerns, and wish to soften or reverse the effects of their socialization.

Converting Teachers

The comparative argument derives strength from the fact that what many researchers and educators want for teachers parallels the conversions of other professionals. Shrinking from novices' eager affirmations of "liking kids" as a reason for going into teaching, they aim to substitute motivations which have to do with worthwhile learning and social justice. They are dissatisfied with teachers' plain views of teaching as doing and telling, and their desire for procedures and techniques to follow, aiming to replace these views and desires by elaborated understandings of teaching and learning as *thinking*, with a focus on "why" rather than on "how."

Transformative ideas. Educators want teachers to care about the human good of learning—as opposed to getting things done or getting things right in school—and about the equal distribution of that good, productive of many other goods, moral and social. They want to change what Johnny learns in school and make sure that Antonio and Maria also get to wonder about the concept of fraction and the wisdom of social arrangements. These reversals imply a shift from observables, from habits, personal experiences, and cultural patterns, to inward activities and abstract notions that may well appear strained to the eye of common sense. According to these transformative ideas, teachers stand for intellectual and civic virtues, and they are supposed to nurture these virtues in all children.

Neither common experiences in everyday life and school nor ordinary ways of making sense and of looking at other people are a great help in preparing teachers for the pursuit of ideals of knowledge and justice in schools. Common sense tends to turn human differences into assertions of inferiority, and it solidifies this tendency in stereotypes. Hence, teachers have to recognize many habitual ways of looking at other people for the distorting and hurtful habits of mind that they are, and strive to overcome those habits in perceptions and actions related specifically to their work (e.g., deliberate patterns of teacher attention and student discipline oriented toward equity; nonautomatic assumptions about which children will be interested in, or good at, what sorts of subjects, topics, or forms of work; conception and construction of a classroom community that embodies respect for the differences among people and encourages learning from them).

Many disciplinary understandings revealing the uncertainties of knowledge never make it into undergraduate education, let alone the public schools. Even understandings included in the curriculum often conflict with common sense and everyday experience. Consider science, for instance, in which "the image of a stationary earth is replaced by that of a stationary sun, iron dissolves into arrangements of electrons and protons, water is revealed to be a combination of gases and the concept of undulations in the air of various dimensions takes the place of the images of sounds" (Oakeshott, 1962, p. 213).

Rejecting received understandings? The shifts desired by many researchers and teacher educators are at least as dramatic as the separations, almost alienations, from the "real world" that other professionals undergo. They are argued on similar grounds, holding up an image of what is true and right in teacher thought and action against beliefs that have deep roots. Lortie (1975) seems to agree with the impersonal stance of nursing educators when he states that "the self of the teacher, his very personality . . . must be used and disciplined as a tool necessary for achieving results" (p. 156). Scholarly work on the preparation of teachers for uncertainty echoes the concerns of medical educators (Floden and Clark, 1988).

One could argue that, just because future teachers have already been initiated into schooling (and are constantly having many extramural experiences of teaching and learning

besides), their socialization must be even *more* of a turning point. Are ever-more complete conversions, more decided breaks with experience, required for teachers? This seems to go too far, especially when one considers that the converted—people who, disbanding their old ways, have been brought over to a new faith—are not always the best learners, becoming, instead, closed minded in a new way.

Counterpoints Redressing the Balance

Before it starts spiraling out of control, the "conversion" argument in professional education in general, and in teacher education in particular, needs to be tamed. It is only partially true for learning in all professions. This is so because a separation from ordinary human beliefs and concerns can be carried too far and may become self-serving, or mute the founding impulse of benevolence that the helping professions share. As I will argue, the "conversion" argument has, in principle, limited applicability to teaching, which also poses monumental problems of implementation.

To return to where we started: Teachers' minds are no tabula rasa, no blank slates, but scratched in deeply with plain characters. Can we replace the slates, wipe out what is upon them, or reverse interpretations, as the idea of breaks with experience in teacher education suggests? Can we do this for all teaching subjects, all concepts, topics, and methods within them? What about understandings of children and learning? Conceptions of knowledge, the teaching role, classroom life, and so on?

The weight of experience alone, downward bearing in quality and quantity, makes effective breaks on all these counts seem unlikely. Yet this weight cannot solely be seen as a dead weight which people must shake off in order to flourish. The experiences of future teachers are no reliable sample of the real or the ideal world of teaching. Still, they include much that, deserving a skeptical respect, tends to be overlooked by the clever, by academics enamored of their fields or reformers carried away by appealing but insufficiently tested ideas.

Common Sense and Experience as Starting Points

Teachers may be intellectual leaders, but they are social managers as well, shepherding groups of youngsters down some meandering path with some purpose and kindness. Do they plan lessons? Do they reprimand and praise where appropriate and fair? Do teachers work at getting students to finish their assignments and themselves try to correct them on time? More subtly, do they put attention seekers in their place while encouraging the timid? Of course, teachers do these and other things that future teachers can see or figure out in a fashion, as they go through school.

Are everyday understandings of knowledge as facts and names completely wrongheaded? Granted that science dissolves the objects of ordinary experience, we can still

sit upon chairs. Also, the commonsense assumption, entrenched in schools, that facts and names are essential for knowledge does resonate with the empirical and conceptual pursuits of science, though falling short of their specific elaborations, especially in terms of methods and criteria of knowing. And even Einstein probably rejoiced at getting things right and getting them done, on occasion.

This suggests that common sense and experience are, at least, among the starting points of teacher preparation: sometimes to be abandoned on examination, sometimes to be refined or deepened, and sometimes to be revived after an erroneous abandonment. Of course, this puts common sense and life experience, as systems of thought and action, on a par with scientific theories, as we have learned to understand their development in this century. A preparation for teaching and knowing through schooling and common sense is partial and far from perfect, and very likely mistaken in many aspects. But it provides some lessons, and it is *there*—in all its inescapable weight.

In examining the case for conversion in teacher education it seems, in sum, impossible to come down on one side or the other. On the one hand, the weight of taken-for-granted understandings in learning to teach makes decisive "breaks" seem necessary, while impossible on all counts. On the other hand, not on all counts are the lessons of experience (inside and outside of school) invalid or useless as a preparation for teaching. This inconclusive assessment throws doubt, in particular, on the argument in support of breaks from experience in teacher education that derives from comparisons with other professions.

Is There Expertise in Teaching—and Does It Matter?

If we order human pursuits on a continuum that marks their permeability to common sense and life experience (that is, their openness to nonspecialized and extraprofessional knowledge), teaching can be placed at the high end, radiology at the low, and the health professions and law somewhere in between. Degrees of relative permeability to common sense and life experience, in short, vary by profession and are not, in themselves, either good or bad. Instead, they must be judged by reference to a profession's particular responsibilities and to its current knowledge situation.

Irrational evaluations of knowledge by source. For professional activities that are, as it were, close to home, their permeability to common sense and life experience is simply a fact about an occupation involving those activities. This fact in itself allows no conclusions about the difficulty of an activity or the validity of associated knowledge.

When nonspecialized and extraprofessional knowledge are discredited, there is a confusion of the *source* with the *value* of knowledge—its significance, complexity, coherence, and trustworthiness. Just because the administration of justice has passed from clans or tribal councils to courts of law longer than health care has passed from the home to doctors' offices and hospitals, it does not follow that current legal knowledge is more sophisticated

or important than knowledge about human health. Conversely, where a profession is relatively impervious to extraordinary knowledge (science or specialized, technical knowledge), this allows no conclusions about the value of its working knowledge or the worth of its work.

Since received understandings and patterns of action supported by common sense include not only superstitions but also some well-winnowed, hard-earned results of collective learning, this confusion of the source with the value of knowledge is liable to result in ignoring practical wisdom and placing too much reliance on science (Buchmann, 1985). In any case, this confusion has an authoritarian bias:

> The question about our sources of knowledge . . . has always been asked in the spirit of: "What are the best sources of our knowledge—the most reliable ones, those which will not lead us into error, and those to which we can and must turn, as the last court of appeal?" . . . no such ideal sources exist—no more than ideal rulers—and . . . *all* "sources" are liable to lead us into error at times. (Popper, 1962, pp. 54-55)

Making the distinction between the value and the source of knowledge is absolutely critical for teaching since—unless future teachers are kept out of schools and out of touch with people—teaching knowledge will always be saturated with common sense and life experience. My claims here are consistent with recent empirical work on the nature of expertise in teaching (see Carter, Sabers, Cushing, Pinnegar, and Berliner, 1987; also Berliner, 1986).

The fit of teaching "expertise" with common sense. In selecting and interpreting information about students, explaining their judgments, and making instructional plans, a small sample of teachers held to be expert in their work used frames of reference and made arguments accessible to almost any person (Carter et al., 1987). These intensively studied teachers had beliefs about what seemed worth knowing in looking at imaginary teaching tasks or situations, and they saw more deeply than others. But what distinguished these "experts" fits comfortably with ordinary good sense.

"Expert" teachers felt it important to take charge of a new classroom, laying down the laws for behavior and learning, and to find out "where kids are." Apparently, experience and plain thinking had made them wise to these things as well as to the "groupness" of teaching and the limits of test scores and of (other) teachers' judgments as indicators of what children know. While wasting no time on information they considered irrelevant, they made *more* of the facts at hand than either novices or postulants to teaching (i.e., individuals entering the profession without pedagogical training).

As stands to reason, novices and postulants were less sure of themselves and about what to expect in teaching. They had more difficulty in seizing on meaningful information

and relating it to action, seeming more "glued" to the surface of things. Experienced teaching professionals considered expert by others, however, were *not* set apart from aspiring teachers or people on the street by any vital change of world view or specialized interpretive and moral codes. Perhaps "expert" teachers do, albeit in a more high-powered way and with more contextual knowledge, what people do for each other as they live and work.

Empirical work has also shown that relative imperviousness to knowledge outside of the scope of experience and common sense is consistent with high-powered knowledge and skills in teaching (see Leinhardt, 1988). This complementary finding underscores the conceptual point made earlier, namely, that occupations not readily affording entry to academic, formal knowledge are not, therefore, lacking in valuable knowledge, skills, or importance.

Teaching as a Human Birthright

If teaching is seeing to it that people learn worthwhile things, we all go through life doing and seeing teaching of many kinds. Collective experience has expressions in archetypes and myths. An archetype of the American teacher as "schoolmarm" places barely educated spinsters in the role of childrens' guardian, in loco parentis, with a derivative, attenuated authority—half-revered, half-despised. Looking more deeply into human memory, there is the myth of the "tutelary spirit," watching over and guiding a person through life. We may find the myth quaint and the archetype demeaning. The point is they exist, highlighting the nature of teaching as a universal human concern with cultural variants and spiritual overtones. People teach, think, sing, and run because they are human:

> By birthright we are all not only thinkers but also singers and dancers, poets and painters, teachers and story-tellers. This means that the professional singer or painter, poet or teacher, dancer or story-teller, is a professional in a different way from the solicitor or doctor, physicist or statistician. . . . Like the runner or the writer or the ruler the thinker may become a professional but can never become an *expert*. (Bambrough, 1986, p. 60)

Breaks with experience in teacher education, like any educational idea or practice, must be judged by the extent to which such breaks can help people come into their own in thinking, learning, and knowing, thus escaping the blind alleys of circumstance. This applies to teachers and to their students. Words of warning from a presidential address by Donald Campbell (1975) to his fellow psychologists may deserve a hearing among educational researchers and teacher educators: "With our conceptual framework still heavily shared with popular culture, our narcissistic motivation for creative innovation overlaps into the motivation to advocate shocking new perspectives" (p. 1121).

Whatever we do as researchers and practitioners, we should not promote irrelevant notions of professional expertise in teaching. Where special knowledge is promoted with a view to raising the status of the teaching profession (see, e.g., Peters, 1977), we should remember the sad commonplace of history that greater power does not increase people's competence and wisdom. When, paradoxically, concerns for teachers' standing in society lead to imperative introductions of "outside" knowledge and to a crowding out of situated knowledge that is valid, the result is loss and harm.

No Ideal Sources of Knowledge

Let me suggest, in conclusion, that people attracted by the call for breaks with experience in teacher preparation may well share some of the motivations of artists and scientists. In the words of Einstein,

> One of the strongest motives that lead men to attempt science is to escape from everyday life with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness, from the fetters of one's own ever shifting desires. With this negative motive there goes a positive one. Man tries to make for himself, in the fashion that suits him best, a simplified and intelligible picture of the world. He then tries to some extent to substitute this cosmos of his for the world of experience and thus to overcome it. This is what the painter, the poet, the speculative philosopher, and the natural scientist do each in his own fashion (cited in Singer, 1981, p. 40).

Inspired by such positive and negative motives, reformers in North American teacher education currently take a confident, all-embracing attitude toward progress. In trying to overcome the world of school experience, they bank on new cosmologies derived from science and academic scholarship and reject commonsense notions of teaching, learning, and knowing.

What may be new in teacher education is quite old in philosophy, which has, in one of its veins, a long tradition of fondness for ambitious metaphysics. This tradition is expressed in grand systems, from Parmenides to Plato, Leibniz, and Hegel—thinkers confident of making progress in unravelling the mysteries of the world and not hesitant to posit ideas of a rather unearthly nature. There may be a moral in the history of philosophy for education. Philosophers have, by and large, abandoned grand schemes and self-assured beliefs in progress, having come to develop a more subtle and tentative stance toward the promises and drawbacks of both philosophy (as well as science, and theory in general) and common sense, whose petrified habits of mind are sometimes justified by sedimentary wisdom.

How can one get from the glazed surface of things, as they are, to the heights and depths of things as they might be in teaching? The answer does not lie in conversions or

simple shifts in what we worship as authoritative knowledge. Nor does it lie in inappropriate comparisons of teaching to other professions, with a misplaced envy of their transformative socialization or of their greater imperviousness to common sense and ordinary experience.

One gets beyond the glazed surface by digging impartially, and carefully, into everything that comes to hand, including the "outside" knowledge by which we hope to improve schools. As Schwab (1978a) pointed out, passively submitting to the dicta of special knowledge is no more rational than disdaining the specialist. Either posture is as fatal to learning as an unrealistic valuation of common sense or its unwarranted dismissal. Reform in education is less like a palace revolution than like a roundabout march to an elusive destination—with faulty equipment, short supplies, and maps that will often turn out to be unreliable.

References

Ball, D. L. (1989, April). *The role of a preservice methods course in unlearning to teach mathematics*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Bambrough, R. (1986). Question time. In S. G. Shanker (Ed.), *Philosophy in Britain today* (pp. 58-71). London: Croom Helm.

Berliner, D. C. (1986). In pursuit of the expert pedagogue. *Educational Researcher, 15*(7), 5-13.

Bodenheimer, E. (1962). *Jurisprudence: The philosophy and method of the law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brittain, V. (1980). *Testament of youth*. New York: Wideview Books.

Brophy, J. (1990). Teaching social studies for understanding and higher order applications. *Elementary School Journal, 90*, 351-417.

Buchmann, M. (1985). What is irrational about knowledge utilization? *Curriculum Inquiry, 15*, 153-168.

Buchmann, M. (1987). Teaching knowledge: The lights that teachers live by. *Oxford Review of Education, 13*, 151-164.

Buchmann, M. (1988). Argument and contemplation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education, 14*, 199-211.

Buchmann, M., and Schwille, J. (1983). Education: The overcoming of experience. *American Journal of Education, 92*, 30-51.

Campbell, D. T. (1975). On the conflicts between biological and social evolution and between psychology and moral tradition. *American Psychologist, 30*, 1103-1126.

Carter, K., Sabers, D., Cushing, K., Pinnegar, S., and Berliner, D. (1987). Processing and using information about students: A study of expert, novice, and postulant teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 3*, 147-157.

Clifford, G. J. (1978). Words for schools: The applications in education of the vocabulary researches of Edward L. Thorndike. In P. Suppes (Ed.), *Impact of research on education: Some case studies* (pp. 107-198). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Davis, F. (1968). Professional socialization as subjective experience: The process of doctrinal conversion among student nurses. In H. S. Becker, B. Geer, D. Riesman, and R. S. Weiss (Eds.), *Institutions and the person* (pp. 235-251). Chicago: Aldine.

Feiman-Nemser, S., and Buchmann, M. (1985). Pitfalls of experience in teacher preparation. *Teachers College Record, 87*, 53-65.

Floden, R. E., Buchmann, M., and Schwille, J. R. (1987). Breaking with everyday experience. *Teachers College Record, 88*, 485-506.

Floden, R. E., and Clark, C. M. (1988). Preparing teachers for uncertainty. *Teachers College Record, 89*, 504-524.

Florio-Ruane, S., and Lensmire, T. (1990). Transforming future teachers' ideas about writing instruction. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 22*, 277-291.

Fox, R. (1957). Training for uncertainty. In R. Merton, G. Reader, and P. Kendall (Eds.), *The student physician: Introductory studies in the sociology of medical education* (pp. 207-241). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

James, W. (1969). The moral philosopher and the moral life. In J. Roth (Ed.), *The moral philosophy of William James* (pp. 169-191). New York: Crowell. (Original work published 1891)

Leinhardt, G. (1988). Situated knowledge and expertise in teaching. In J. Calderhead (Ed.), *Teachers' professional learning* (pp. 146-168). New York: Falmer Press.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McDiarmid, G. W. (1990). *Tilting at webs of belief: Field experiences as a means of breaking with experience*. East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Education.

Newman, J. (1925). *The idea of a university*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. (Original work published 1852)

Oakeshott, M. (1962). The voice of poetry in the conversation of mankind. In *Rationalism in politics: And other essays* (pp. 197-247). New York: Basic Books.

Peters, R. S. (1977). The place of philosophy in the training of teachers. In R. S. Peters (Ed.), *Education and the education of teachers* (pp. 135-150). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Popper, K. (1962). On the sources of knowledge and of ignorance. *Encounter, 19*(3), 42-57.

Royce, J. (1969). The philosophy of loyalty. In J. McDermott (Ed.), *The basic writings of Josiah Royce* (Vol. 2, pp. 855-1014). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1908)

Schutz, A. (1962). On multiple realities. In M. Natanson (Ed.), *Collected papers: Vol. 1. The problem of social reality* (pp. 207-259). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schwab, J. (1978a). Eros and education: A discussion of one aspect of discussion. In I. Westbury and N. J. Wilkof (Eds.), *Science, curriculum and liberal education: Selected essays* (pp. 105-132). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schwab, J. (1978b). The impossible role of the teacher in progressive education. In I. Westbury and N. J. Wilkof (Eds.), *Science, curriculum, and liberal education: Selected essays* (pp. 167-183). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singer, I. M. (1981). Mathematics. In W. Shropshire (Ed.), *The joys of research* (pp. 38-46). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute.

Soltis, J. F. (1981). Education and the concept of knowledge. In J. F. Soltis (Ed.), *Philosophy and education* (80th yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part 1, pp. 95-113). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

White, J. (1985). Doctrine in a vacuum: Reflections on what a law school ought (and ought not) to be. *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform, 18*, 251-267.

Zeichner, K. M. (1980). Myths and realities: Field-based experiences in preservice teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 31*(6), 51-55.

Zeichner, K. M. (1981-82). Reflective teaching and field-based experience in teacher education. *Interchange, 12*(4), 1-22.